

Con Artists



RECENT CRIMES/INCIDENTS

Thursday 10/20/2011

A resident was approached by a female subject who told him that her company would soon be doing construction work to the houses on either side of his. She asked him to meet her in the alley so that she could show what the work would entail. While distracted in this manner, a male subject entered the house through the unlocked front door. While inside, the male subject removed \$2,600.00 in cash. By the time the resident realized what had happened, the subjects had already driven away in a black, two door vehicle.

Friday 11/11/2011

Two subjects, one male and one female, identified themselves as City of Miami Springs employees and advised a resident that they were there to inspect her home for mold. This came one day after the resident had received a courtesy notice from Code Compliance about the dirt and mold on her roof. The resident let them in and the subjects separated with one going to the garage, who the resident followed. The resident became suspicious when she asked the female for identification and she stated that their supervisor was around the corner with both of their ID's. The subjects left in a small, white, two door japanese vehicle shortly after. The resident called MSPD and checked her bedroom while waiting for them to arrive. She discovered a gold bracelet with small emeralds was missing.

Thursday 11/17/2011

A male subject knocked on a resident's door and told her there was a sewer line break behind her house and requested she go with him into the back yard to check it out. The resident also noticed that the subject had gotten out of a small white vehicle with no markings on it and that he was the passenger. The resident refused and the subjects left the area in their vehicle. MSPD responded and there was no sewer line break.

Many con artists are professionals in that they are well-dressed, polite and courteous smooth-talkers who say the

right things to gain the trust of their intended victims. They are usually overly friendly and complimentary and often try to distract their targets so they can get inside residences.

Fake IDs and Uniform

Many legitimate workers wear laminated photo IDs on chains or lanyards around their necks, and con men have picked up on that image. Wearing fake IDs makes criminals appear to have an official position or job. Some crooks even add to that image by carrying a clipboard or briefcase. Another visual image criminals assume is that of a utility worker, complete with a fake utility company name patch on a shirt similar to those worn by legitimate utility workers. Some criminals even add a metal name plate or name patch over a shirt pocket, along with a photo ID on a lanyard. If you're ever in doubt as to the legitimacy of a utility worker, city worker or county employee, call the police immediately.

Common Residential Con Games & Illicit Schemes

- A man or a woman, sometimes carrying an infant or accompanied by a young child, will ask for money to buy gas for a vehicle or to hire a cab for a medical emergency.
- Two men will come to your door and say they are with the water company and are ordered to test your kitchen tap water. When you accompany one man into your kitchen, the other man will go into your bedroom and steal anything of value. A new twist on the scam has occurred in South Florida. An alleged water inspector will say he has to test your water and put some in a container while you watch. He will secretly add an ingredient that makes the water foam and accidentally on purpose splash some on your hands. He will say the liquid contains acid and urge you to remove your rings and wash your hands with soap. The man will then take your rings and leave.
- In early May, a man pretending to be an exterminator stole a 2 ½ carat diamond wedding ring from an elderly woman at her Coral Gables home. According to police, the 79-year-old woman had just returned from the supermarket when she noticed a man supposedly spraying bugs near her home. He said he was an exterminator and began spraying near her garage. The woman told the man to leave but he sprayed her hands. The phony exterminator told the woman the liquid was acid and she needed to wash her hands quickly. He went into the bathroom with the resident allegedly to help her but he soaped up her hands, stole the ring and ran. The thief was described as being in his late 30s or early 40s, 5 feet 7, 160 pounds, with brown hair.
- A man will come to your door and say he's going to put up a fence or do maintenance work on your neighbor's property and he wants your okay on a boundary or some other matter. When you go around the side of your house with the man, an accomplice who has kept out of sight will enter your house and steal valuables.
- A man appearing to be a contractor or blue collar worker will knock on your door and offer to trim your trees, repave your driveway, repair a dent on your vehicle, or perform some other service for a bargain price. He will ask for a deposit to buy materials, and if he gets advance money, you will never see him again. Some alleged workers will start a job before asking for money for supplies to finish the job. Then he will disappear.
- Some con men bring carloads of teenagers into an area and send them out to knock on doors to sell candy or other items allegedly to raise money to combat drug use or for some other phony cause.
- Some swindlers carry spray bottles with an allegedly super cleaning liquid and immediately try to clean your car or anything in sight. It's a scam.
- A con wearing an ID will knock on your door and say he is going around meeting neighbors and try to shake your hand. Don't fall for it. He will attempt to get you to enter a fake contest or donate to an allegedly worthy cause.
- If you are in your yard and a vehicle stops and a stranger calls you over to allegedly ask for directions or says he is looking for a lost pet, go inside and call the police.
- If a stranger knocks, it's better to let him know someone is home without opening the door because if a burglar thinks the residence is unoccupied, he might break a window or kick open a door to enter and commit a burglary.
- Beware of people who look suspicious or behave suspiciously, even if you see them at a neighbor's house. Most residents inherently know what type of people or vehicles belong in their area. Go with your instincts.

Miami Springs Police Officers proudly serve the city and don't want you to become a victim. If a solicitor knocks on your door, call the police at 305-888-9711. If possible, supply a description of the solicitor and his or her vehicle. **NEVER HESITATE TO CALL THE POLICE!**

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Note: Presently, no one has a permit to solicit in the City of Miami Springs. In the future, if a permit is issued by the Chief of Police, the name of the issuant will be listed on the MSPD website.

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